you. But which are suited to represent which kind of life, I cannot say.'

b  ‘Well, we’ll consult Damon’70 about it,’ I said, ‘and ask him what combinations are suitable to express meanness, insolence, madness, and other evil characteristics, and which rhythms we must keep to express their opposites. I seem to remember hearing him talking rather obscurely about “composite march rhythms”, “dactyls”, and “heroics”, arranging them in various mysterious ways and marking longs and shorts; he talked also, I think, about “iambics and trochees”, and assigned quantities of different lengths. And I believe that he praised or blamed the composition of the foot as well as the rhythm as a whole, or perhaps it was the combination of the two: I really can’t remember. In any case, as I said, we can refer to Damon. For it would need a lot of argument to settle the details, don’t you think?’

‘Heavens, yes!’

c  Summary

Plato proceeds to sum up the general purpose of this stage of education – to train both character and moral and aesthetic judgement, these last two being closely allied. The influence of environment on growing minds is again emphasized: it is because of this that so rigid a control of the music and poetry to be used in education is required. Mathematical and (so far as it then existed) scientific training is reserved for a later stage of the Guardians’ education; see Part VIII. But a reference there to introducing ‘arithmetic and geometry’ in childhood shows that though no reference is made to them here some mathematics is to be studied at this earlier stage (536d).

‘But there is one thing you can decide at once, that beauty and ugliness result from good rhythm and bad.’

‘That is undeniable.’

d  ‘And good rhythm is the consequence of music adapted to a good style of expression,71 bad rhythm of the opposite; and the same is true of mode, good and bad, if, as we said a moment ago, both the rhythm and mode should be suited to the words and not vice versa.’

‘The words must of course determine the music,’ he said.

‘But what about the style and diction?’ I asked. ‘Don’t they depend on character?’

‘They must.’

‘And the rest on style?’

‘Yes.’

‘Good literature, therefore, and good music, beauty of form and good rhythm all depend on goodness of character;72 I don’t mean that lack of awareness of the world which we politely call “goodness”, but a mind and character truly well and fairly formed.’

‘I quite agree.’

‘And are not these things which our young men must pursue, if they are to perform their function in life properly?’

‘They must.’

‘The graphic arts are full of the same qualities and so are the related crafts, weaving and embroidery, architecture and the manufacture of furniture of all kinds; and the same is true of living things, animals and plants. For in all of them we find beauty and ugliness. And ugliness of form and bad rhythm and disharmony are akin to poor-quality expression and character, and their opposites are akin to and represent good character and discipline.’

‘That is perfectly true.’

‘It is not only to the poets therefore that we must issue orders requiring them to portray good character in their poems or not to write at all, we must issue similar orders to all artists and craftsmen, and prevent them portraying bad character, ill-discipline, meanness, or ugliness in pictures of living things, in sculpture, architecture, or any work of art, and if they are unable to comply they must be forbidden to practise their art among us. We shall thus prevent our guardians being brought up among representations of what is evil, and so day by day and little by little, by grazing widely as it were in an unhealthy pasture, insensibly doing themselves a cumulative psychological73...
damage that is very serious. We must look for artists and craftsmen capable of perceiving the real nature of what is beautiful, and then our young men, living as it were in a healthy climate, will benefit because all the works of art they see and hear influence them for good, like the breezes from some healthy country, insensibly leading them from earliest childhood into close sympathy and conformity with beauty and reason.'

'That would indeed be the best way to bring them up.'

'And that, my dear Glaucon,' I said, 'is why this stage of education is crucial. For rhythm and harmony penetrate deeply into the mind and take a most powerful hold on it, and, if education is good, bring and impart grace and beauty, if it is bad, the reverse. And moreover the proper training we propose to give will make a man quick to perceive the shortcomings of works of art or nature, whose ugliness he will rightly dislike; anything beautiful he will welcome gladly, will make it his own and so grow in true goodness of character; anything ugly he will rightly condemn and dislike, even when he is still young and cannot understand the reason for so doing, while when reason comes he will recognize and welcome her as a familiar friend because of his upbringing.'

'In my view,' he said, 'that is the purpose of this stage of education.'

'Well then,' I went on, 'when we were learning to read we were not satisfied until we could recognize the limited number of letters in the alphabet in all the various words in which they occurred; we did not think them beneath our notice in large words or small, but tried to recognize them everywhere on the grounds that we should not be literate till we could.'

'That is true.'

'And we can't recognize reflections of the letters in water or in a mirror till we know the letters themselves. The same skill and training are needed to recognize both.'

'Yes, they are.'

'And then I must surely be right in saying that we shall not be properly educated ourselves, nor will the Guardians whom we are training, until we can recognize the qualities of discipline, courage, generosity, greatness of mind, and others akin to them, as well as their opposites, in all their many manifestations. We must be able to perceive both the qualities themselves wherever they occur and representations of them, and must not despise instances great or small, but reckon that the same skill and training are needed to recognize both.'

'You are most certainly right,' he agreed.

'And is not the fairest sight of all,' I asked, 'for him who has eyes to see it, the combination in the same bodily form of beauty of character and looks to match and harmonize with it?'

'It is indeed.'

'And what is very beautiful will also be very attractive, will it not?'

'Certainly.'

'And is it, then, with people of this sort that the educated man will fall in love; where the harmony is imperfect he will not be attracted.'

'Not if the defect is one of character,' he replied; 'if it's a physical defect, he will not let it be a bar to his affection.'

'I know,' I said; 'you've got, or once had, a boy friend like that. And I agree with you. But tell me: does excessive pleasure go with self-control and moderation?'

'Certainly not; excessive pleasure breaks down one's control just as much as excessive pain.'

'Does it go with other kinds of goodness?'

'No.'

'Then does it go with violence and indiscipline?'

'Certainly.'

'And is there any greater or keener pleasure than that of sex?'

'No: nor any more frenzied.'

'But to love rightly is to love what is orderly and beautiful in an educated and disciplined way.'

'I entirely agree.'

'Then can true love have any contact with frenzy or excess of any kind?'

'It can have none.'

'It can therefore have no contact with this sexual pleasure, and lovers whose mutual love is true must neither of them indulge in it.'
They certainly must not, Socrates,' he replied emphatically.

'And so I suppose that you will lay down laws in the state we are founding which will allow a lover to associate with his boy friend and kiss him and touch him, if he permits it, as a father does his son, if his motives are good; but require that his association with anyone he's fond of must never give rise to suspicion of anything beyond this, otherwise he will be thought a man of no taste or education.'

'That is how I should legislate.'

'And that, I think,' said I, 'concludes what we have to say about this stage of education, and a very appropriate conclusion too – for the object of education is to teach us to love what is beautiful.'

'I agree.'

2. Physical Education

Plato does not go into detail but makes it clear that he is thinking of a military as much as of an athletic training; which is why, perhaps, he tends to regard it, as appears later, as a stage of education, lasting approximately from the eighteenth to the twentieth year, rather than as something which accompanies the secondary education which he has just finished describing. Young men at Athens in the fourth century spent two years, from eighteen to twenty, doing a course of compulsory military training, and it is of military training as much as of physical education in our sense that Plato is thinking.

The passage proceeds to criticize certain developments of contemporary medicine of which Plato disapproved (criticisms which read harshly to us, though they indicate that Plato is thinking of health education in general as much as physical education in the narrower sense), and more briefly, to condemn litigiousness (Plato undoubtedly has contemporary Athens in mind); it ends by emphasizing that physical, as much as literary, education is aimed primarily at the development of character.

'The next stage in the training of our young men will be physical education.'

'Of course.'

'And here again they must be carefully trained from childhood onwards. My own opinions about this are as follows: let me see if you agree. In my view physical excellence does not of itself produce a good mind and character; on the other hand, excellence of mind and character will make the best of the physique it is given. What do you think?'

'I agree.'

'If the mind therefore has been adequately trained, we should do well then to leave to it the minutiae of physical training: all we need do, for brevity's sake, is to give a rough outline.'

'Yes.'

'We have already forbidden drunkenness.' A Guardian is the last person in the world to get drunk and not know where he is.'

'It would be absurd,' he replied, 'for a Guardian to need someone to look after him.'

'What about diet? Our Guardians, you will agree, are competing in the most important of all contests.'

'Yes.'

'Is the ordinary athlete's physical condition appropriate for them?'

'Perhaps so.'

'But the athlete in training is a sleepy creature and his health delicately balanced. Haven't you noticed how they sleep most of their time, and how the smallest deviation from their routine leads to serious illness?'

'Yes, I've noticed that.'

'So we shall need a more sophisticated form of training for our soldier athletes. They must be as wakeful as watchdogs, their sight and hearing must be of the keenest, and their health must not be too delicate to endure the many changes in the water they drink and in the rest of their diet and the varieties of temperature that campaigning entails.'

'I agree.'

'And do you not also agree that the best form of physical